

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PC-01 HA-05 SS-15 SSO-00 NSCE-00
SP-02 PM-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 INRE-00 L-03
PA-01 ICAE-00 EB-08 IO-13 SY-05 MCT-01 DODE-00
H-01 A-01 OPR-02 CA-01 /086 W
-----068524 110908Z /14
O 110733Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7959

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASEC, PINT, CASC, AF (SUMSER, JOHN)
SUBJECT: ARREST AND RELEASE OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO PEACE CORPS

REF: A. KABUL 3808 B. SECSTATE 119850

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: REFTEL GAVE PCV'S ACCOUNT OF HIS ARREST AND SUBSEQUENT RELEASE. WE WISH HERE TO FILL OUT THE STORY IN TERMS OF EMBASSY'S AND PEACE CORP OFFICE'S ACTIONS IN THE CASE, INCLUDING THE AMBASSADOR'S REPRESENTATIONS TO THE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER. END SUMMARY

2. AT APPROXIMATELY 7:15 ON THE EVENING OF MAY 9, CONSULAR OFFICER MARTIN ADAMS RECEIVED TELEPHONE CALL FROM MARINE SECURITY GUARD AT EMBASSY, DIRECTING HIM TO CALL A NUMBER AT MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. WHEN ADAMS TELEPHONED MFA, HE FOUND FOREIGN MINSITER, HAFIZULLAH AMIN, ON THE LINE WHO REPEATED INFORMATION MINISTER HAD PASSED TO MARINE GUARD, THAT AMERICAN NAMED JOHN SUMSER WAS IN CUSTODY AT THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE, FOR ALLEGEDLY HAVING IN HIS POSSESSION SEVERAL PICTURES OF AFGHANISTAN'S LAST KING ZAHIR SHAH.

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3. AMIN ALSO REMARKED, PERHAPS REFERRING TO SUMSER'S CAPTORS AT MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, THAT SOME INDIVIDUALS WERE ATTEMPTING TO DAMAGE THE COURSE OF AFGHAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS. HE STATED THAT SUMSER WOULD BE RELEASED FORTHWITH, AND ASKED WHETHER AUTHORITIES SHOULD LEAVE HIM IN SHARI-NAU, A SECTION OF KABUL, OR DELIVER HIM TO

ADAMS AT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE.

4. ADAMS THANKED THE MINISTER FOR HIS DIRECT INTERVENTION AND ASSISTANCE AND THEN MADE ARRANGEMENTS TO PICK UP SUMSER AT THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE.

5. UPON ARRIVAL AT MINISTRY, ADAMS, ACCOMPANIED BY ECON COUNSELOR CARROL FLOYD AND CONOFF WARREN MARIK WHO WERE AT HIS HOUSE, WAS RECEIVED WITH RESPECT AND CORDIALITY BY SOLDIERS, SOME OF WHOM WE LATER LEARNED, HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN ABUSING PCV SUMSER. THE SOLDIERS APOLOGIZED FOR THE TREATMENT SUMSER HAD RECEIVED AND SPOKE OF THE FRIENDSHIP THAT HAD ALWAYS EXISTED BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND AFGHANISTAN. SUMSER WAS THEN RELEASED TO THE EMBASSY OFFICERS.

6. ON MORNING OF MAY 10, ADMINISTRATIVE COUNSELOR WOODWARD SPOKE TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY PROTOCOL OFFICE ABOUT THE SUMSER INCIDENT AND WAS ADVISED THAT MATTER SHOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH EITHER THE NEW DIRECTOR OF THE MINISTRY'S CONSULAR DEPARTMENT OR WITH THE ECONOMIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT. EMBASSY CHOSE TO HAVE AMBASSADOR DISCUSS MATTER WITH NEW DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER.

7. AT 1430 HRS MAY 10, THE AMBASSADOR, ACCOMPANIED BY DCM, CALLED ON NEW DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER SHAH JOHAMMAD
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DOST. SUMSER'S ARREST WAS AMONG MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED. AMBASSADOR ASKED THAT HIS THANKS FOR FOREIGN MINISTER AMIN'S PERSONAL INTERVENTION IN THE CASE THE NIGHT BEFORE BE CONVEYED TO HIM AND HOPED THAT SIMILAR INCIDENTS DID NOT RISE AGAIN. DEPUTY MINISTER DOST SAID HE VERY MUCH REGRETTED THE OCCURRENCE AND ASKED FOR THE EMBASSY'S PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING DURING THESE EARLY DAYS OF THE REGIME'S ADMINISTRATION. HE SAID THAT DESPITE ORDERS OUT THAT FOREIGNERS BE TREATED COURTEOUSLY, THERE WERE LOW-LEVEL ELEMENTS AMONG THE MILITARY, ETC. WHO DID NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND AND WHO WERE PROBABLY OVERLY TOUCHY IN THESE TIMES. AMBASSADOR SAID WE APPRECIATED THIS BUT INCIDENTS OF THIS KIND, ALONG WITH THAT OF THE ARREST OF AP CORRESPONDENT BARRY SHLACHTER (SEPTTEL), WOULD NOT BE WELL RECEIVED BY THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND HARDLY CONTRIBUTED TO THE WARM BILATERAL RELATIONS THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN PROFESSED TO WANT.

8. AT THE TIME OF MY DISCUSSIONS WITH DOST I DID NOT HAVE SUMSER'S FULL WRITTEN ACCOUNT OF HIS EXPERIENCE. WHEN I NEXT SEE FOREIGN MINISTER AMIN OR DEPUTY MINISTER DOST, AND I HOPE IT WILL BE SOON, I PLAN TO TELL THEM HOW VERY DISTURBED I WAS OVER HOW SUMSER HAD BEEN TREATED AND THAT I HAVE BEEN

INSTRUCTED BY WASHINGTON TO PROTEST THAT THE TREATMENT GIVEN THE PCV IS NOT IN ACCORD WITH THE MUTUAL DESIRE OF THE DRA AND USG TO MAINTAIN A FRIENDLY AND COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP. FURTHER THE MOST BASIC PRECONDITION FOR THE CONTINUATION OF OUR PROGRAMS IN AFGHANISTAN IS THE SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF AMERICANS.

9. AT AROUND NOON ON MAY 10, PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR GEORGE BALDINO VISITED THE PRINCIPAL OF THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS TRAINING CENTER, TO INQUIRE CONCERNING THE AVISABILITY OF SUMSER'S RETURNING TO TEACH THERE. THE PRINCIPAL STATED THAT, BEFORE HE SHOULD RESUME TEACHING, THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR MUST DECLARE THAT IT HAS NO OBJECTION.

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10. LATER THAT AFTERNOON, BALDINO CONVENED A MEETING WITH PCVS, RELATING SUMSER'S EXPERIENCE AND ADVISING ALL VOLUNTEERS TO BE CAUTIOUS IN THEIR ACTIVITIES.
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